

Through Expanded Learning for Results, in addition to adding time for core academics and teacher collaboration, schools add time for students to participate in enrichment activities such as dance, drama, music, art, sports, and foreign languages. In recent years, under pressure to focus on tested subjects like math and English, many schools have cut back on time for these kinds of classes. Research shows schools spend about one-third less time on these types of enrichment activities than they did 10 years ago. However, research also shows—and experienced educators know—that these types of activities play a fundamental role in helping students gain new skills and interests, build self-confidence, and become more deeply engaged in school and learning. In many schools, these enrichment activities play an important role in helping students develop 21st-century skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, public speaking, and the ability to communicate ideas clearly. Enrichment classes can also be used to reinforce learning and teach standards in new hands-on ways.

There are multiple approaches to integrating time for enrichment into your plan for a better, stronger school day. The most common strategy is for schools to add an elective period that meets several times a week and offer students a range of class options. These classes are taught either by regular teachers, specialists, or outside partners. Another strategy some schools have used is to expand the time allotted for specials such as art, music, PE and computers or even add an additional special block to their schedules. These schools often hire additional specialist teachers to cover the additional classes and use this time for classroom teachers to meet for common planning time. A less common strategy, used more frequently in elementary schools, is to embed enrichment in core academic subjects by inviting cultural or community partners to offer programming that is aligned with specific curricular goals.

Regardless of the approach schools use there are several key lessons learned regarding what makes an effective enrichment program.

## Lessons Learned

- 1. Support the focus.** ELR schools that leverage enrichment to support a school-wide instructional focus build cohesion and alignment between core academics and other subjects to better support student learning and outcomes. There is also value in offering courses that build skills in non-academic areas, such as health and fitness, and contribute to a well-rounded education. These classes can support the school-wide instructional focus too.
- 2. Build Mastery.** Enrichment is a vehicle for students – especially those in the middle grades - to build mastery, deepening their skills and interests. Strong ELR schools offer opportunities for sequential instruction and specialization in order to build mastery and better prepare students to pursue their interests in high school.

- 3. Less is Sometimes More.** Schools should aim for a manageable number of high quality enrichment programs. Often ELR schools start with a broad array of enrichment offerings that can be hard to manage, vary widely in quality and become a distraction to the administration and leadership team. These schools have narrowed the number of choices and partnerships as teachers and students develop strong interests and its clearer which programs are successful. While enrichment programs are exciting to invent and plan, on their own, they will rarely support low performing students in achieving proficiency.
  
- 4. Assess Quality.** Schools need to analyze performance data and feedback from students and teachers to identify which programs are successful and which ones are not. Schools should develop quality standards for enrichment programs and administrators should visit these programs just as they visit academic classes to assess student learning and engagement. Schools need to continuously reevaluate which programs to offer based on these assessments.
  
- 5. Ensure Consistency.** While enrichment classes often offer a more relaxed environment than some academic classes, strong ELR schools maintain the same school rules and norms for behavior across both academic and enrichment courses. When a partner teaches an enrichment course, schools need to make a special effort to help the partner understand the school's norms and expectations.
  
- 6. Build a Positive School Climate.** Done well, enrichment programming can play a key role in creating or reinforcing a positive school climate. By providing opportunities for students to experience success, for teachers to share their passions, and for families and the broader community to engage in school through culminating events that showcase student work, good enrichment programming can make schools exciting and engaging places to learn.